



Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Roundtable

Supporting Work Attachment and Job Retention in the Rural States

Olive Branch, Mississippi

November 7-8, 2007

Prepared for:

The Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



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I. Event Overview

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants in rural areas face unique challenges finding and retaining employment. Studies have shown that in general, finding and retaining employment can be difficult. For low-income families the challenges are even greater. Rural areas often have less favorable employment opportunities, lower paying jobs, and limited access to services like public transportation or child care. Given these conditions, TANF participants in rural areas face severe challenges to becoming self-sufficient. While many participants are willing to relocate to obtain employment, these participants only remain employed for a short time before returning home.

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, as part of its ongoing mission to support the sharing of promising practices in welfare reform, joined with the Mississippi Department of the Human Services to focus on work attachment and job retention in Mississippi's TANF population. The goal of this Roundtable was to provide Mississippi with innovative ideas and promising practices that forge new partnerships and collaborative efforts to facilitate job attachment for TANF clients in rural areas.

On November 7 and 8, 2007 the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network supported a one and a half day event in Olive Branch, Mississippi focusing these issues. Thirty participants attended the Roundtable, including Federal agency staff, representatives from the Mississippi Department of Human Services regional offices, and representatives from partner programs in Mississippi, North Dakota, Nevada, and Ohio. The Roundtable featured a review of research on job attachment and retention, examples from the field, presentations on developing regional partnerships to support employment, and dialogue among participants to facilitate action planning for Mississippi to strategize about next steps for necessary programmatic and policy changes.

II. Job Attachment and Retention Research

Al Fleming from the Office of Family Assistance cited information from the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 which re-focused TANF on employment services and engaging all customers in appropriate work activities. The DRA has tightened the focus of the TANF program on work to improve employment outcomes among participants.¹ States must submit work verification plans to outline how work activities and participation will be monitored and verified.² TANF Reauthorization requires States and communities to develop effective engagement strategies and promising practices around serving clients, and encourages partnership between local, State, and Federal governments.

III. Why focus on Job Attachment and Retention?

Studies have shown that finding and retaining employment can be difficult. Since 2001, labor markets have been on the downturn. According to Al Fleming, statistics from 2000 to 2003 indicate that the amount of all households with a full-time full-year worker fell from 88 to 85 percent. At the same time, the proportion of families with children rose from 30 to 32 percent.³ For low-income families it is even worse. When low-income families find employment, the jobs often do not provide sufficient income. Studies show that “[l]ow-income families receive fewer job benefits and face greater food and housing hardships than middle-income families.”⁴ Also, research suggests that the median hourly wage for the

¹ Welfare Reform: Interim Final Regulations Fact Sheet.

² Welfare Reform: Deficit Reduction Act Fact Sheet.

³ The Urban Institute. (2005). Low-Income Working Families: Facts and Figures: Assessing the New Federalism. <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900832.pdf>.

⁴ The Urban Institute. (2005). Low-Income Working Families: Facts and Figures: Assessing the New Federalism. <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900832.pdf>

primary worker in low-income families is \$9, less than two-thirds the hourly wage for middle-income families. Retaining employment under these circumstances can be extremely stressful.

IV. TANF in Rural Communities

Poverty in America is often perceived to exist in a predominantly urban setting but in reality, since 1959, families in rural environments have experienced higher poverty rates than their counterparts in America's cities.⁵ Also, rural areas often have less favorable employment opportunities, lower-paying jobs, and limited access to services like public transportation or child care. While only 14 percent of the national TANF caseload live in non-metropolitan communities, rural States experience a very different reality – with as many as three-quarters of their TANF caseload living outside urban areas.⁶ Given the conditions in rural areas, these TANF participants face severe challenges to becoming self-sufficient.

Support from ACF has helped address difficult economic conditions faced by TANF clients in rural regions, though opportunities for further progress still exist. Health care, food security programs, child care, transportation and programs that supplement earnings like the Earned Income Tax Credit are just some of the areas that remain critically important to the well-being of rural low-income families.⁷

With TANF program administrators facing new requirements under the DRA and given the continued scale of poverty and limited job opportunities in rural areas, it has never been more important to engage clients into appropriate work activities, and promote work attachment and job retention.

V. The Mississippi Context

Cheryl Sparkman, Director at the Mississippi Department of Human Services provided background information on the workforce system in Mississippi. The systems are comprised of the Governor's Office, State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC), Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and the community and junior colleges.⁸ Although Mississippi has unfilled, well paying positions in many areas of the state, there is a preponderance of areas in which jobs are scarce. The department attempts to distribute the workforce appropriately by relocating TANF participants to areas of the state with an abundance of employment opportunities with the hope that these opportunities will provide a gateway to self-sufficiency. MDHS far too often finds that relocated families leave community support behind and find themselves significantly challenged by the task of assimilating in the new place. Despite the State agency's generous supportive services, when this combination of circumstances occurs, participants often leave the new job and return home.

The Research

Wendy Sission of ICF International facilitated this session that highlighted the findings of a study conducted by Mississippi State University. As a result of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act (PRWORA), a maximum sixty-month "life-time" limit was instituted that set a benefit window for TANF block-grant recipients, involving TANF beneficiaries actually finding paid employment somewhere in the extant labor force. Based upon this premise, Dr. Dominico Parisi, a member of the team conducting a study involving

⁵ Rural Sociological Society. (2006). The Challenges of Rural Poverty. RSS Issue Brief – Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-First Century, Number 2, January 2006. <http://www.ruralsociology.org/briefs/brief2.pdf>

⁶ Government Accountability Office. (2004). Welfare Reform – Rural TANF Programs have Developed Many Strategies to Address Rural Challenges. United States Government Accountability Office. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04921.pdf>

⁷ Rural Sociological Society. (2006). The Challenges of Rural Poverty. RSS Issue Brief – Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-First Century, Number 2, January 2006. <http://www.ruralsociology.org/briefs/brief2.pdf>

⁸ Parisi, Dominico. (2007). Peer TA Network Presentation: National Strategic Planning & Analysis research Center (nSPARC).

the National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC), Mississippi State University, examined three key aspects of the transition-to-work portion of welfare reform in Mississippi and related them to the potentially uneven realization of sustainability that may be associated with the rural-urban continuum. Using USDA's recent taxonomy of urban influence for Mississippi counties, they examined the following three issues. One, they estimated the prospects for local labor markets to "absorb" the 1996 cohort of TANF recipients by "matching" their current educational credentials to the projected growth in jobs within specific minimum educational levels over the successive five-year period (1997-2002). Because childcare arrangements and transportation are two critical elements for sustaining the transition-to-work by families on welfare in the face of available employment opportunities, they also examined the characterization of local areas to meet those needs. Two, childcare facilities in each county within the labor market area were identified and their spatial distributions plotted so as to ascertain the relative availability of these services for TANF recipients. Three, the availability of private automobiles at the household-level within counties was used as a proxy for the availability of transportation. The spatial proximity of households to major road and highway systems was likely to be an effective indicator of "transportation access" in a rural-oriented state such as Mississippi.⁹

Dr. Parisi shared results that showed, contrary to popular images, that there are significant portions of the 1996 TANF cohort who have post-high school education (even holding baccalaureate degrees), however, there are also disjunctures in the "job-matching" prospects for TANF recipients that vary spatially. The nSPARC study found that the Delta region labor market involving the nonmetropolitan Clarksdale LMA appears to hold the bleakest outlook for TANF recipients to find jobs that will require the educational credentials that they hold. Areas of the state with the highest levels of urban influence hold the brightest prospects for "job-matched" employment. Additionally, the availability of regulated childcare facilities also follows this pattern of urban influence.¹⁰

nSPARC also found that the large number of people expected to reach the lifetime limit did not materialize between 1996 and 2006 and that, in fact, it would take another twenty years for the majority of participants to reach the lifetime limit.¹¹ However, blacks were more likely than their white counterparts to reach the lifetime limit, as were individuals in poor economic, social, and spatial conditions, when compared to their counterparts.¹² Conclusions of the study were that work pays off and that more focus should be given to policies to place low income families on a path to self-sufficiency, which would include integrating TANF with other state and federal workforce initiatives.¹³

VI. Addressing Job Attachment and Retention in Rural Communities

Examples from the field

Kansas City, MO

The agency partnered with employers to offer participants information on worker support in the workplace. By offering client job retention payments, employer skill development vouchers, and post-employment case management, Kansas City has been able to respond to the community interest in promoting wage progression among clients while maximizing supporting service dollars.

Memphis, TN

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Parisi, Dominico. (2007). Peer TA Roundtable Presentation: TANF, Time Limits and Work.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Using a model similar to Kansas City, Memphis DHS has cultivated a relationship with FedEx to build upon the mutual needs of DHS and FedEx. By providing clients with support service options such as transportation and loans for personal vehicles, Memphis has seen success with the collaboration and many cases have been closed because of wage progression among clients.

Dallas/Fort Worth, TX

While engaging employers is key to the promotion of job retention, Dallas/Fort Worth realized the importance of supporting workers at home. The agency initiated an in-home learning retention project where computers are installed in the homes of clients who have become employed. The Business Access program provides online adult education and job training courses. From their homes, clients can search for jobs, develop job skills, and even find certain home-based employment.

Riverside, CA

From 2000 to 2003, ACF sponsored the Employment Retention and Advancement Project, in which MDRC evaluated 15 programs in eight States on their effectiveness in promoting job retention and advancement. One such program MDRC evaluated was the Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Program in Riverside, California. Researchers found that participants in the PASS program increased employment rates by four percent above the control group, and increased earnings by 11 percent.

The program helps participants who have left the TANF program keep their jobs, maintain self-sufficiency, and find better paying jobs. Features of the program include resume preparation assistance, life skills workshops, referrals to education and training opportunities and supportive services payments for transportation and child care.

VII. Innovative Programs

Partner states presented innovative strategies that increased their retention outcomes and provided additional supportive services for TANF participants. North Dakota's Transitional Jobs Task Force uses time-limited, wage-paying jobs that combine real work, skill development, and supportive services to transition participants rapidly and successfully into the labor market. Nevada's Job Connect System connects businesses with employees and provides skills training tailored to employer demands. Cuyahoga County Ohio's Prevention, Retention and Contingency Program provides broad-based, systematic services to include job preparation, training and retention services ranging from occupational training to uniforms for training, emergency assistance, outreach and community education, child welfare services, kinship care, developmental services, and relocation assistance.

Nevada: JobConnect System

Kelly Karch of the Nevada JobConnect System described how Nevada developed a partnership between the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, private businesses, and State of Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services. The Nevada JobConnect System is a statewide network that connects businesses with employees, all in one convenient system. For employers, Nevada JobConnect offers recruiting, retention, training and retraining, and outplacement services, as well as valuable information on labor law and labor market statistics. For job seekers, Nevada JobConnect offers career development information, job search resources, training programs, and, as appropriate, unemployment benefits. Targeted populations receive intensive assistance to overcome barriers to employment.

North Dakota Transitional Jobs Task Force

Tom Alexander from the North Dakota Transitional Jobs Task Force discussed the unique challenges North Dakota faces among their workforce. Mr. Alexander stated there are significant workforce shortages due to an aging population, coupled with a younger population that in general, leaves the state after graduation and does not have children. The remaining population consists of an educationally challenged group with limited work and life skills. The North Dakota Transitional Jobs Task Force was developed to address these challenges. The Task Force seeks to keep communities safe by assuring competitive, meaningful job training and employment for people with multiple employment barriers. The vision is a model program within an accessible continuum of services that provides community training and competitive employment for people with multiple employment barriers.¹⁴ This program features time-limited, wage-paying jobs that combine real work, skill development, and supportive services to transition participants rapidly and successfully into the labor market. Engineering, manufacturing, and oil are the most significant skill shortages in North Dakota.

Task Force partners include:

- The North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University
- The North Dakota State Parole and Probations Office
- The Federal Parole and Probations Office
- North Dakota Rehabilitation & Consulting Services
- North Dakota Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
- The Fargo Area Chamber of Commerce
- The North Dakota Job Service
- Friendship, Inc.
- Production Alternatives

The Task Force is a consensus-based decision making model which relies upon results-oriented consensus processes; grassroots community consultations; forums for diverse leaders to establish relationships, study and discuss problems, and build agreements; and expert documentation for the development of agreements and legislation, rules, projects, or other tools for legislative, executive, judicial, and private-sector.¹⁵ North Dakota has found that it is important to have a decision-making process based on consensus and that having an outside facilitator greatly enhances efficiency. The model itself is key to the management of competing interests and priorities among the task force.¹⁶

*Building and Sustaining Employment-Focused TANF Programs
Cuyahoga County, Ohio: Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program*

Leisha Coggins, Program Director for the Cuyahoga County Prevention, Retention and Contingency Program detailed steps Ohio instituted to help families overcome immediate barriers to self-sufficiency as part of Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Benefits and services are specifically tailored for needy and low-income employed families who need short-term help to support an individual or a family during a crisis. The program is designed to divert clients from cash assistance, maintain employment, remove barriers like abuse and neglect, stabilize and/or reunify the family environment, and assist in establishing a two parent household.¹⁷

The PRC plan has different service categories and benefits including job preparation, training, and retention services ranging from occupational training to uniforms for training; emergency assistance, diversion, and preventative benefits; outreach and community education; and relocation assistance for families impacted by disasters or lead poisoning.

¹⁴ Alexander, Tom. (2007). Peer TA Roundtable Presentation: North Dakota Transitional Jobs Task Force

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Coggins, Lisa. (2007). Peer TA Roundtable Presentation: Prevention, Retention and Contingency

VIII. State to State Dialogue and Action Planning

The discussion of the programs and practices in other states provided the backdrop for the participant States to connect with one another to ask questions and learn about these promising practices. This informal dialogue encouraged the formation of new partnerships and collaboration among participants. Mississippi participants strategized with Nevada, Ohio, and Delta State faculty around work attachment and job retention in Mississippi. Ohio and Mississippi strategized around finding adequate providers, especially for night shift workers. Nevada and Mississippi discussed tailoring skills to certain jobs that are in demand and helping released convicts re-enter the workforce. Delta State faculty and Mississippi discussed partnering with community groups like Americorps.

Participants identified the following barriers to job attachment and retention in the Mississippi rural TANF population:

1. Lack of after hours and off-season childcare providers
2. Generational lack of motivation to be educated
3. Lack of community support and place development
4. Low educational attainment
5. Passive parenting
6. Lack of creativity in the field to address needs

IX. Closing Remarks and Evaluation

The networking sessions conducted during this event afforded participants the opportunity to leverage the Roundtable as a catalyst for action planning efforts. Mississippi identified four activities to assist them in addressing the needs of its rural population: increasing communication between partnering providers; assessments and training; tracking of activities for evaluation purposes; and providing feedback from lessons learned.

Overall, participants, speakers, and facilitators agreed that the Roundtable was a successful event that will help build the statewide and local capacity for Mississippi to support families in rural areas.

Appendix A: Agenda



WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

Supporting Work Attachment and Job Retention in the Rural States



Whispering Woods Hotel and Conference Center
Olive Branch, Mississippi
November 7th-8th, 2007

DAY ONE

8:30 – 9:00 AM

Registration and Networking

9:00 – 9:30 AM

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Janie Tapp, Administration for Children and Families Region IV
Richard "Rickey" Berry, Mississippi Department of Human Services
Al Fleming, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

9:30 – 10:30 AM

Setting the Context

This session includes two presentations designed to establish a common baseline and shared language around the issues facing work attachment and job retention for TANF clients in Mississippi.

9:30 – 10:00 AM

Mississippi Priorities

Cheryl Sparkman, Mississippi Department of Human Services
Mississippi will give an overview of their program as well as motivations around submitting this TA Request.

10:00 – 10:30 AM

Research Perspective on Job Attachment and Retention

Welfare Peer TA Network
Welfare Peer TA will give an overview of national research on what supports are necessary to facilitate job attachment for TANF clients who have relocated.

10:30 – 10:45 AM

Break

10:45 – 12:00 PM

State Spotlight

This session will provide participants an opportunity to introduce themselves and describe the needs and challenges of facing job attachment and retention in their States.

1:00 – 3:00 PM

Spotlight on Mississippi

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Panel Presentation: Mississippi Research Perspective

Dr. Domenico "Mimmo" Parisi, Mississippi State University

Dr. Steven Grice, Mississippi State University

Dr. John Green, Delta State University

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Overview of Research on 'Job Matching' in the Welfare-to-Work Transition

Dr. Domenico "Mimmo" Parisi, Mississippi State University

Researchers from MSU published the report *Prospects for 'Job Matching' in the Welfare-to-Work Transition: Labor Market Capacity for Sustaining the Absorption of Mississippi's TANF Recipients*. In this session, the representative will provide an overview of the research and strategies for effective job matching for TANF recipients and TANF leavers.

2:30 – 3:00 PM

Overview of Mississippi Rural Economic Development Assistance Program

Pat Lewis, Mississippi Business Finance Corporation

The Mississippi Rural Economic Development Assistance Program (RED), administered by the Mississippi Business Finance Corporation (MBFC), is a program designed to enhance projects which are to be financed through the Industrial Development Revenue Bond Program (IRB) and the Small Enterprise Development Program (SED). Eligible companies under the IRB Program are manufacturing facilities, processing facilities, certain warehouse and distribution centers, certain telecommunication and data processing companies, multi-state national or regional headquarters, certain research and development and technology intensive enterprises.

3:00 PM – 3:15 PM **Break**

3:15 PM – 4:15 PM **Developing Regional Partnerships to Support Employment**

3:15 PM – 3:45 PM

North Dakota: Transitional Jobs Task Force

Tom Alexander, North Dakota Transitional Jobs Task Force

North Dakota implemented the TJ Task force to first respond to a need for reentry services in the State. The task force gathered in April 2006 to develop a TJ strategy, and included members from the business community, corrections, Chamber of Commerce, state legislators, and other supportive services programs. Today, the taskforce builds momentum for transitional job through sharing information and expertise across the community.

3:45 PM – 4:15 PM

Nevada: JobConnect System

Kelly Karch, Nevada JobConnect System

Nevada developed a partnership between the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, private businesses, and State of Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services. The program supports TANF clients finding and maintaining employment.

4:15 – 4:45 PM

**Building and Sustaining Employment-Focused TANF Programs
Cuyahoga County, Ohio: Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program**

Leisha Coggins, Cuyahoga County Employment and Family Services

The Prevention, Retention, and Contingency program was established to help families overcome immediate barriers to self-sufficiency as part of Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Benefits and services are for needy and low-income employed families who need short-term help to support an individual or a family during a crisis or episode of need. Families receiving assistance under other public assistance programs including Ohio Works First, Disability Financial Assistance and Food Stamps may also apply for Prevention, Retention and Contingency services and benefits at their local county department of job and family services.

4:45 – 5:00 PM

Day 1 Wrap-up & Day 2 Preview

Welfare Peer TA Network Staff

Al Fleming, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

This session will conclude Day 1 and introduce the activities for Day 2.

DAY TWO

8:30 – 9:00 AM

Day One Overview and Outlook for Day Two

Welfare Peer TA Network Staff

Al Fleming, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Engaging Employers to Support Workers in the Workplace

Representative, Governor Barbour's Office

Representative, Toyota

10:00 – 10:15 AM

Break

10:15 – 11:15 AM

State to State Dialogue

This time will allow the participant States to connect with one another to ask questions and learn about promising practices, which were highlighted in the introductory sessions and panel discussions. This is time for informal dialogue and interactive Q & A. The purpose of this session is to encourage the formation of new partnerships and collaboration among participants.

11:15 – 12:30 PM

Action Planning

Participants will break into working groups by State to address the action items deemed most critical. Teams will be provided action-planning tools to support and facilitate their discussions. These tools will ask participants to capture their current strengths, challenges, opportunities, and resources -- both available and needed -- on the given topic.

12:30 – 1:00 PM

Action Planning Report Outs

1:00 PM

Closing Remarks & Evaluation

Al Fleming, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance

Welfare Peer TA Network Staff

Appendix B: Participant List



WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK
*Supporting Work Attachment and Retention
in the Rural States*



Olive Branch, Mississippi
November 7-8, 2007

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WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

*Supporting Work Attachment and Retention
in the Rural States*



Olive Branch, Mississippi
November 7-8, 2007

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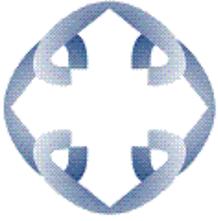
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Appendix C: Evaluation Summary



Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

Sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families

Evaluation Summary

Supporting Work Attachment and Job Retention In The Rural States

Olive Branch, Mississippi

November 7 - 8, 2007

1. Peer TA Staff handled the logistics, arrangements, and scheduling of the event in a timely and competent manner.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Average Score
1	0	1	4	10	4.38

2. Peer TA staff prepared me for the meeting by providing clear communication regarding the meeting's agenda and purpose.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Average Score
0	1	2	5	8	4.25

3. The speakers had valuable information to share, and were thorough in the subject areas presented.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Average Score
0	1	2	5	8	4.25

4. The speakers engaged the audience effectively and facilitated interactive discussions.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Average Score
0	1	0	4	11	4.56

5. The information presented and shared will be useful in improving outcomes for TANF child-only cases.

Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Average Score
0	2	5	5	4	3.69

6. **What did you find most useful about attending this roundtable (i.e. any immediate or long-term benefits to you/your staff that you anticipate as a result of attending this roundtable)?**

- The piece received on Cuyahoga County, Ohio's programs. The possible implementation of a diversion program to help in eliminating some of the rural county issues.
- Provided an opportunity to evaluate/identify issues that can be addressed/solved. Also, provided an opportunity to establish a plan to solve the problems.
- Some best practices were learned that I will be able to take back and share with my staff.
- Discussions with the other states gave me ideas on possibilities for MS. We need more information from "our" folks on possibilities for change or enhancements in some areas.
- The state to state dialogue was very beneficial.
- The event allowed me to look into the issues sister agencies most address on a routine basis. It will allow me to do a better job as a partner.
- Social interaction, Learning from each other.
- Input from Universities and visitors.
- Ideas for helping to develop workforce and job retention tracking. Diversion prevention program.
- Networking connections – Among individuals from MS and those from other states.
- Gained some useful info from other states represented that can be "tweaked" and implemented in MS to develop relationships with employers to get our customers hired. MDHS needs to develop better working relationships with our partners at the local level.
- Gathering information thru networking.
- Hearing what other states are doing about retention in rural areas.

7. **About what issues would you like to have had more discussion at the roundtable?**

- None
- None
- None
- More discussion on the actual issues that affect the rural areas of the State of Mississippi.
- Tracking attendance for work participants.
- None
- More on engaging employers to support workers. Would liked to have had the opportunity to develop an action plan with employer.
- Partnerships and outcome with the Employment Security Division.
- Strategies that have worked – case studies.
- None
- Tracking retention/diversion/prevention.
- More detailed discussion among participants regarding priority topics – info sharing even among state agencies.
- Group discussion with reps from MDHS. MDRS and MDES to determine what improvements are needed to enhance our current cooperative agreements.

8. **On which aspects of work attachment and job retention would you like to receive additional technical assistance?**

- Emotional training – ex: how to enable clients to learn how to relocate successfully.
- More examples of successful programs in states comparable to this one.
- More information on tracking the customers over a period to ensure barriers don't affect job retention.
- Developing a means of accessing statistical data regarding TANF population.
- More information from Mimmo on tracking clients after they leave TANF. He mentioned some tracking they can also do.
- Community building.
- Results of changes.
- Evaluation.
- Relocation programs.
- Tracking customers after leaving TANF system.
- Job development/place development. Retention of the family.
- Building employee relations. How to develop communities. Case staffing to involve all entities.

9. Please share any overall comments regarding the program or the speakers, which you feel might be helpful in planning future programs.

- Informative – Kept attention.
- I would like to see the different entities having more specifics on providing help to rural customers find and keep jobs even if it results in relocation. The need to allow more time to work on the action planning phase.
- All speakers were informative. However, I think it would help to spend some time explaining how each presentation relates to the purpose of the program.
- The meeting was very successful. We have set some goals to resolve our childcare issues. This will remain one barrier to work attachment and job retention.
- I enjoyed the event and it is reassuring that we all face the same challenges.
- Would have been better if all of the speakers had actually come and participated.
- Very enjoyable.
- Informative and received ideas we can use to help with placement and retention. The statistical information was ok but not relevant to what we do in the field or will have any impact on what the field does.
- More detail regarding other programs in other states – we got a great overall purview and ideas but not the implementation process. Programs other states have – other than the ones we heard from. Not enough time for action planning.
- State to State dialogue was a great time of sharing and learning. Was a means to network and ID contact people for future reference. Identified areas to be worked on: Employer relations, Community development, diversion program, education/training. More time is needed for action planning and networking with other partners.